

Hi Chuck,



Thanks so much for the resources - Alex Bean's interview covers a lot of ground I would have asked about. Here are the three questions I came up with. Let me know if anything needs clarification.

In your introduction to Jump Cut's "Gays and Film" issue, you state that getting submissions from gays and lesbians for Jump Cut was difficult in part because outlets like the gay/lesbian/feminist presses already existed. What benefits did Jump Cut see in including gay film criticism in its own politically pluralist, but more academic, publication?

Although the three editors were heterosexuals, we had homosexual and/or bi people in the Chicago and (lesser) Berkeley collectives. And Chuck and Julia had both had gay/lesbian friends, co-workers, roommates, and people that we'd done political work with over the years. Life was like that in the 60s counterculture and the New Left. So there wasn't anything unusual about that. Also, we had contributors who were queer, but not always out.

There were gay publications that regularly covered films (e.g. Gay Community News [more activist] with Michael Bronski; various writers for the more mainstream Advocate; Off Our Backs [lesbian feminist], etc. These publications could pay writers, so active journalistic writers often would head there first. And probably some writers had already developed networks for publication.

I think there was also a brash tone on our part, and the fact that we published initially using a tabloid newspaper format, on newsprint, that some (many?) found repellant. JC wasn't the kind of publication you could show to the Dean to show you were being a productive scholar. And we were obviously leftist.

Part of this also reflects the 70s era. Film and cultural circles and academic circles did have gay men present, but often they had a kind of pretension to upper class snobbiness, and distain for vulgarity and anything activist. They were gay in practice, but very much in the closet, and elitist. A different, often younger, generation had come up through the anti-Vietnam War years, had no problem combining high culture and low culture, being open about sex, drugs, rock n roll, etc. Of course the AIDS pandemic changed a lot of things, and people's minds. More people came out, saw the necessity of coming out, especially as there was a severe AIDS backlash by powerful political figures and groups.

Were lesbian/gay/feminist writers hesitant to publish their work in a non-gay journal? If so, how were you able to overcome these difficulties? (I know you speak of Thomas Waugh and Richard Dyer's submissions to Jump Cut. Were there any other similar stories?)

I don't think people thought of JC as "non-gay"—I think it was clear in our editorials that we were socialist, feminist, activist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist. And that our articles reflected that politics. Of course there were some people who were part of groups that were skeptical of what we were doing: for example, lesbian feminists who only wanted to write and publish for their tribe, or some black nationalists, etc.

A lot of our connections were with people who were artists or filmmakers, etc. And that's a pretty open community. And filmmakers want to be written about.

You could get a certain perspective on this by reading some of Tom Waugh's work, especially his several collections of articles where he re-visits when they were written and reflects on the times and context.

Another useful measure might be to consider a figure like Gerald Mast, who was a well known, well published, and distinguished film professor (he was hired to start the film program at the University of Chicago). He never wrote about a film as an out gay man, nor did he present himself as such, but he was friendly and generous to me and Julia. He did come out when he was diagnosed with AIDS. As a different case, Robin Wood did finally come out and wrote an important early essay about being a gay film critic/academic. He was also left-leaning. But he couldn't stand JC. We were too unruly, didn't respect the type of canonical works Wood loved (Hitchcock, Ophuls, etc.), and we knew French film theory, etc. These things were all repulsive to Wood.

So it was a combination of generation, politics, style, attitude, and defying the "standards" of routine academic publication (standard format bound print journal). Political conservatives (gay and straight) hated us; but we didn't respect them or think it was important to meet their expectations. So we were free to invent ourselves and go our own way.

-----

2) During the early 80s, Jump Cut published several pieces on pornography including the special section "Sexual Representation" in 1985 which heavily featured pieces on gay pornography. At that time, how common was analyzing commercial pornography, and especially gay pornography, in film & media studies programs and journals?

It was absolutely unknown and unheard of. We were at least 15 years ahead of the times. Remember too that Tom and Richard's articles appeared with explicit illustrations That's something that even the new scholarly journal Porn Studies

doesn't do.

And further, how did the study of commercial pornography from a media theory perspective relate to the broader radical culture work envisioned by Jump Cut?

Well, pornography had been raised as an explicit issue by the feminist movement in the 1970s, and some different groups were organized to attack it. And some films were made about the subject (Bonnie Klein's *Not A Love Story* the most famous). There was also a response, particularly around 1980 or so of other feminists, especially in the arts, of defending women artists who used explicit depictions of sexuality in their work. This became known as the Sex Wars or Culture Wars debates. This also involved arguments about B/D and SM as practices among feminists, especially lesbians.

We always understood that a battle against censorship was essential to doing radical cultural work. We knew that back in the 60's. The vast expansion of commercial porn in film starting in the late 60s and early 70s made it a highly topical issue.

3) In several issues between the journal's inception and the early-80s, Jump Cut covers small, locally based events and collectives like the UCLA Gay & Lesbian Media Conference, Canada's DEC Films Collective, and a community film festival in a working class neighborhood in Dayton, Ohio. Did Jump Cut have any explicit ties to these geographic locations?

Yes, Peter Steven who was part of the Chicago JC group worked with DEC. The Dayton thing was lead by a group of film/media makers we knew very well from meeting them at festivals, having them stay at our place in Chicago while editing the *Men's Lives* film, etc. You have to realize that we all lived a bohemian, artist and student lifestyle, and our places were crash pads for similar people who were passing through town, etc. This was also true of the Berkeley situation with John Hess's house. We knew a lot of the folks at the UCLA conference—John Ramirez had written for us, etc. we'd met Bob Rosen, Andrea Weiss, etc. and had known Janet Bergstrom, Bill Nichols, Julianne Burton, Waugh, etc. for many years in more academic settings, but also knew Jan Oxenberg, Greta Schiller, John Greyson, etc. from film festivals.

And if not, what guided Jump Cut's philosophy in covering these geographically specific events given the magazine's international readership? How did Jump Cut see its relationship to both the historical particularity that

these events provided and the abstracted political ideals so central to its film criticism?

Well, we aspired to an international readership, but with print issues that was hard to do: we had to send physical copies through two mail systems; for someone to subscribe they had to get US dollars (not easy in many parts of the world at that time) and send them to us, etc. We would always waive that for Eastern Europe, Africa, etc. I think often US folks sent copies of JC personally to friends abroad, or international students would carry them back, etc. We learned that at the Iranian film school (after the dictator, before the Ayatollah took control) articles from JUMP CUT were translated into Farsi and distributed as mimeographed items. Plus we had lots of international contacts: John Hess with German filmmakers, Julia Lesage with Latin American ones, Julia and I had studied in France and the UK, etc. We all came out of Comparative Literature and had a basic orientation to international thinking. Film is a very cosmopolitan art form, and you meet lots of folks at festivals, etc.

I suppose on one level we were practicing “think globally, act locally”—we always saw local grassroots actions as the most valued, the most important for developing a political movement. That’s where you could meet people face to face, work out things in immediate and practical terms. Working collectively in groups was part of the 60’s way of thinking, and we had collectives in Chicago and Berkeley for much of the 70s and into the 80s.

Let me know if you have any more questions.

Thanks so much again for all the help,

Alex Schultz